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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY: SLIM VICTORY FOR INCUMBENT ADANA MAYOR STILL HOTLY  
CONTESTED BY AKP AND CHP

REF: ADANA 0015

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. Initial election results from Adana's mayoral race showed incumbent Mayor Aytac Durak, who switched to the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) after the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) declined to renominate him, had edged out his primary AKP rival by fewer than 1,500 votes. A close runner up from the Republican People's Party (CHP) trailed by only a few thousand votes himself. Despite rampant rumors of fraud and ballot tampering, the city remains calm with only a handful of peaceful protest marches. Durak's victory remains hotly contested, however, as rival-party lawyers navigate complex legal procedures to push for a recount. Notwithstanding the present turmoil, contacts believe Durak will likely receive his formal commission by the end of the week. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) Five days after the March 29 elections, Adana's recount was ongoing in at least seven of Adana's ten constituencies, and suspended in several others. At issue is a labyrinthine and layered tabulation process that includes a group of people called Ballot Boards (BB), a second called the District Election Board (DEB), the Provincial Election Board (PEB) - all three of which fall under Ankara's Higher Board of Election (HBE). At the time of vote counting, the BBs (comprised of representatives from various parties) create tabulations of the count as they place the ballots in a sack that is later sealed and secured. After the BBs tabulate each ballot, the results are certified by the DEB and entered into a computer database. Allegations of fraud are pointed primarily to inconsistencies between the BBs vote tally for the ballot sack, and what the DEB has recorded on the official tabulation sheet.

¶3. (SBU) AKP and CHP have filed complaint petitions with all Adana DEBs, demanding votes in all constituencies be recounted. They believe tally discrepancies will show fraud at either the BB or DEB level. In districts where MHP was the winner, the party filed a petition with the PEB to suspend the recount; the PEB complied based on a procedural filing error by other parties. AKP and CHP then filed an appeal to the HBE in Ankara to overturn the PEB's suspension that would seem to work in MHP's favor, resulting in another legal impasse. Another issue of concern is the unprecedented number of annulled votes in this election - over 35,000. (Votes are annulled if voters stamp over two party symbols, if the ink is illegible or between symbols, or if the ballot is torn or damaged.) AKP supporters have alleged Durak's followers purposely double-stamped ballots to void their votes. According to most contacts, the HBE will make a final ruling sometime this week, most likely cementing Durak's razor-thin victory.

¶4. (SBU) COMMENT: Locals tell us they can't recall an election result with so slim a margin of victory and so hotly contested, not only in Adana but nationwide. Rumors of rampant electoral fraud pulse through every shop, cafi and office around the city, with claims of ballots that were burned, purposely annulled, or discarded in city dumpsters. Journalists tell us the truth has

become so distorted by gossip and conflicting media accounts that not even the political parties themselves know what is happening. Despite the legal mayhem, the city remains calm, save for a few thousand CHP supporters peacefully marching in protest. As Durak has already been at Adana's municipal helm for over 20 years, city dwellers seem prepared to accept his fifth term with a quiet resignation. END COMMENT.

GREEN